

Emergency Drought Barriers Planning Update

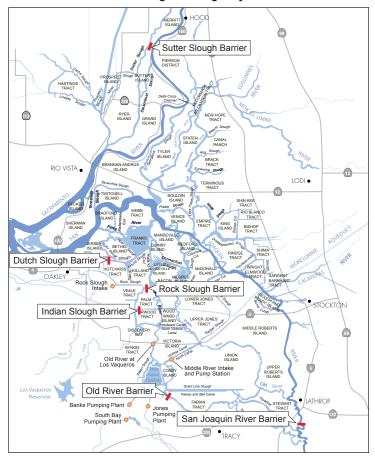
February 2015

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) seeks to work out in advance acceptable environmental and water quality safeguards if during the next decade, temporary, emergency rock barriers are needed to help block salinity in several channels of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during times of severe drought.

Tides from San Francisco Bay meet Sacramento and San Joaquin river outflow in the Delta. In dry years, water stored upstream in California's biggest reservoirs – including Shasta and Oroville – is needed to repel saltwater and keep it from contaminating water supplies for Delta farmers and communities, water districts in Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara counties, and the 25 million Californians who get at least some of their supplies from the federal Central Valley Project and California's State Water Project. During severe drought conditions as we are experiencing now, less water is available in the upstream reservoirs for release. The barriers also are intended to avoid salinity intrusion so great that rain in the next wet season may be insufficient to expel the salt.

One way to help conserve water stored in upstream reservoirs during drought years is to install temporary rock barriers across key channels in the Delta. The rock barriers would hinder the upstream

Locations of 1976-77 Drought Emergency Barriers

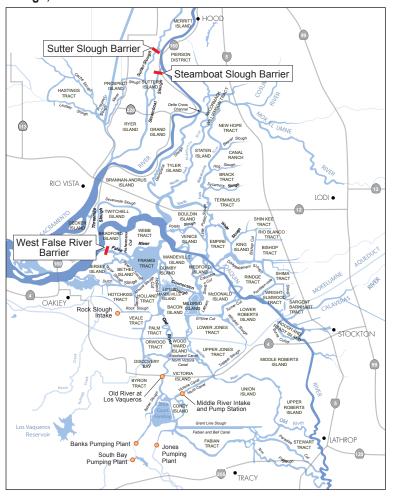


movement of tide-driven saltwater. Such temporary barriers were used effectively on several channels in the severe drought of 1976-77.

After determining that emergency drought barriers would not be necessary in the drought year of 2014, DWR staff continued talking to permitting agencies and analyzing the potential effects in case the drought persisted. Suggestions made by Delta residents were considered and examined by engineers.

In January 2015 DWR submitted an application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a programmatic permit to allow the installation of temporary rock barriers for no more than eight months in a single year across three Delta channels (West False River, Steamboat Slough, and Sutter Slough). The permit application seeks to allow DWR to use emergency barriers as a drought management tool up to three times over the next 10 years in the event drought conditions gets so severe that barriers are necessary to conserve water needed to maintain public health and safety.

Locations of Planned 2014 Barriers on Sutter Slough, Steamboat Slough, and West False River



The Department hopes to avoid the use of emergency drought barriers in this and every other year. While the barriers would likely maintain good water quality for much of the Delta, they also would likely degrade water quality conditions for some areas in the western Delta, adversely affecting Delta fisheries and interfering with Delta boating and recreation.

Any decision to install temporary emergency drought barriers would be made jointly by multiple federal and State fishery and water management agencies. Installation also would require a temporary urgency change petition to the State Water Resources Control Board, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service and a determination by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

DWR also will seek access permits that may be necessary from local reclamation districts and landowners for this long-term plan. DWR will seek to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Delta Water Agency regarding extreme drought measures. All these activities are intended to ensure the planning and permitting requirements are done well in advance of a decision to install emergency drought barriers, so work can begin quickly if necessary.

Based on an environmental analysis and more than nine months of discussion with Delta residents and water district managers, DWR concluded that through environmental commitments and mitigation, the emergency drought barriers would not have significant environmental impacts. On January 23, 2015, DWR filed an Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, available at http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/docs/Emergency_Drought_Barriers_Initial_Study_and_Proposed_Mitigated_Negative_Declaration.pdf. The document includes details on how to comment on DWR's analysis and proposed declaration.

For more information, please go to http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/emergencybarriers.cfm or contact Paul Marshall, Chief, Bay-Delta Office, California Department of Water Resources, at Paul.Marshall@water.ca.gov or 916-653-1099.